

LAND PARTNERSHIPS

GRANT PROGRAM



PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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1 Introduction

The Cumberland County Commissioners adopted the Cumberland County Comprehensive Plan (which incorporated the Land Partnerships Plan) in December 2024. Adoption of the plan marked the completion of the planning process and the starting point for plan implementation.

The goals, objectives and strategies included in the plan are intended to be actively pursued by the County independently or in cooperation with other stakeholder organizations. The Cumberland County Board of Commissioners authorized funding to the Land Partnerships Grant Program to achieve the goals, objectives and strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and Land Partnerships Plan.

2 Program Objectives

The Land Partnerships Grant Program will provide financial assistance to municipalities and not-for-profit organizations in Cumberland County for projects and plans that implement the Cumberland County Comprehensive Plan and Land Partnerships Plan.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- Financially incentivize actions among federal, state, county and local governments, non-profit organizations, businesses and landowners that implement the shared vision found in the Comprehensive Plan and Land Partnerships Plan.
- Grow the economy of Cumberland County while conserving critical lands that protect our natural resources, provide recreation opportunities, and enhance the agriculture industry.

3 Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to apply for funding under the Land Partnerships Grant Program:

- Any municipality in Cumberland County. Multi-municipal applications are eligible and encouraged. A private entity with an interest in conservation and recreation may apply in partnership with a municipality to submit an application.
- Not-for-profit organizations with 501(c)3 status that have an identified focus on natural resource protection, agriculture preservation, parks and trails, or land conservation.

4 Eligible Activities

Financial assistance under the Land Partnerships Grant Program falls under three separate categories:

- Land Acquisition
- Park, Trail and Greenway Development
- Conservation & Recreation Planning

Each category and the associated activities are discussed in more detail below.

4.1 Land Acquisition

4.1.1 Eligible Projects

The Land Partnerships Grant Program will assist applicants in purchasing land or conservation easements on properties that provide one or more of the following benefits:

- Farmland Preservation – working farms that sustain the agricultural economy of Cumberland County and local municipality.
- Natural Resource Protection – lands that protect our water or other natural resources or provide wildlife habitat.
- Parkland – lands that provide active or passive recreational opportunities for current and future generations.
- Greenways and Trails – linear open space corridors that may serve recreational or natural resource purposes.

4.1.2 Acquisition Methods

All land acquired through this program must be acquired via one of the following options:

- Fee simple acquisition – Full title to the subject parcels of land are acquired from the landowner and the municipality or not-for-profit organization assumes ownership and associated maintenance and management responsibilities. In the instance of acquisition by a not-for-profit organization, substantial benefit to the public must be demonstrated and assured in perpetuity.
- Conservation easement – The owner of the subject parcels of land enter into a conservation easement with the municipality or a not-for-profit organization. The original owner will maintain ownership of the land and the land will be restricted from development in perpetuity.

Program funds cannot be used to acquire lands subject to an eminent domain proceeding or land required for dedication through the land development process.

4.1.3 Land Ownership

All land or easements acquired through this program must be owned or have the conservation easement held by a municipality or a qualified not-for-profit conservation organization. Cumberland County will not own or hold conservation easements on land acquired through this program.

4.1.4 Eligible Costs

The following costs shall be considered eligible under this program:

- Purchase price of the land or easement

- Legal fees, in connection with acquisition or easement preparation
- Appraisals
- Boundary survey
- Title search
- Title insurance
- Stewardship costs for easement monitoring will be considered on a case-by-case basis for not-for-profit organizations with Board approved and adhered to policies on establishment of monitoring costs and endowment levels

4.1.5 Ineligible Costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible under this program:

- Grant preparation costs
- Project administration, overhead and staff costs of applicant

4.1.6 Eligible Match

The following costs, although not reimbursable, can be considered part of the required local match to the county grant:

- Donated land value
- Environmental assessment and remediation

4.1.7 Use of Land

Land purchased with grant funds under this program must be used for recreation or open space purposes with normal accessory appurtenances and shall be available to all residents of Cumberland County. All properties purchased with county funds shall be restricted in a manner that prohibits in perpetuity the future sale or change in use other than the uses allowed under the Land Partnerships Program and such restrictions are subject to County legal review.

Public access to properties is desirable in all cases. If an applicant is seeking to purchase farmland or open space where limited or no public access is being considered, the exact nature of the public access limitations and reasons for placing those limitations shall be provided to the County when the application is filed.

4.1.8 Maintenance Plan

Each grant application shall contain a description about how the applicant will maintain, and permanently fund the maintenance of, the property or improvements in a safe, accessible and usable manner. This general description should include an overall maintenance budget, source and permanency of funding and the personnel assigned to maintain the facilities.

4.1.9 Price of Land

Grants will be made for land that is appropriately priced. The applicant may consider bargain sales, life estates, installment purchases or other legal and financial mechanisms. All grant requests must be accompanied by a self-contained appraisal report prepared by a Pennsylvania Certified General Real Estate Appraiser for each property to be acquired. Appraisals should be full narrative reports prepared in accordance with the Uniform Standards for Professional Appraisal Practice. The report should be prepared in sufficient detail with full documentation to justify to Cumberland County that the applicant is paying no more than the fair market value for the property or easement. The appraisal report should separate out the value of substantial improvements on the land.

Cumberland County reserves the right to perform an appraisal on the property or easement at the county's own expense. If an applicant purchases a property at a price in excess of the appraised value of the property as accepted by the County, the grant will be based on the appraised value, not on the purchase price.

4.2 Park, Trail & Greenway Development

4.2.1 Eligible Projects

As Cumberland County's population grows, so too does the future demand for parks, trails, and other recreational facilities. Such facilities provide recreational opportunities for present and future generations and contribute to the quality of life of the community.

Park, Trail and Greenway Development grants may be used for rehabilitation of existing parks and development of new park, trail, greenway and open space facilities. Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Construction of site improvements such as:
 - Athletic fields
 - Trails
 - Roads and parking areas
 - Landscaping
- Construction of site amenities such as:
 - Signage
 - Lighting
 - Restrooms
- Purchase of capital/equipment such as:
 - Playground equipment
 - Picnic tables
 - Park benches

4.2.2 Eligible Costs

The following costs shall be considered eligible under this program:

- Labor and materials for park, trail and greenway development
- Equipment and capital purchases
- Requests for design and engineering costs may be considered when the applicant can demonstrate that funding for construction is secure or a clear funding strategy is presented at the time of application.

Construction contracts, materials purchases and equipment rentals must be advertised, bid and awarded in accordance with all applicable laws.

4.2.3 Ineligible Costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible under this program:

- Monuments or memorials
- Concession facilities
- Grant preparation costs
- Project administration, overhead and staff costs of applicant
- Facility maintenance costs and equipment maintenance costs such as tractors and mowers

4.2.4 Eligible Match

The following costs, although not reimbursable, can be considered as part of the required local match to the county grant:

- Contemporaneous, acquisition costs
- Design and engineering costs
- Construction administration and inspection
- In-kind labor and equipment

4.2.5 Cost of Improvements

Applicants are encouraged to develop realistic costs for development projects. Grant requests for improvements must be accompanied by a cost estimate prepared by an architect, engineer or landscape architect or price quotes received in response to a bid solicitation.

4.2.6 Development Provisions

A grant recipient is expected to make use of the appropriate design professional to prepare a site plan and/or specifications used for the layout and construction of any public facility. All drawings and/or specifications shall be sealed by an appropriate design professional, as necessary.

4.2.7 Maintenance Plan

Each grant application shall contain a description about how the applicant will maintain, and permanently fund the maintenance of, the property or improvements in a safe, accessible and usable manner. This general description should include an overall maintenance budget, source and permanency of funding and the personnel assigned to maintain the facilities.

4.2.8 Ownership

An applicant requesting grant funds for a development project must own or control, for the life of the project, the property or facility that will be developed. The applicant shall legally restrict any property improved under the Land Partnerships Program to ensure that the property remains a public park, trail or open space area in perpetuity.

4.3 Conservation & Recreation Planning

Local planning efforts establish the vision and framework for future conservation efforts and recreation opportunities. Eligible activities include the development of new or updated planning documents, which directly address farmland preservation, natural resource protection and creation of parks, trails & greenways.

4.3.1 Conservation & Recreation Plan Development

4.3.1.1 Eligible Projects

Following are examples of eligible projects under the Plan Development component:

- Greenway & Open Space Plan
- Park & Recreation Plan
- Park Master Plan
- Trail Feasibility Study or Master Plan
- Property Management Plan (i.e. Forest Management Plan, Nature Preserve Management Plan, etc.)

Multi-municipal plans are encouraged and will be given funding priority. Plans developed or amended through this program must be reviewed and recommended for municipal approval by the Cumberland County Planning Department and be adopted by the municipality(s) in order to receive funding.

4.3.1.2 Eligible Costs

The following costs shall be considered eligible under this program:

- Professional planning consultant fees
- Mapping and graphics directly related to the approved project
- Direct costs associated with completion of the approved project such as printing, advertising, etc.

4.3.1.3 Ineligible Costs

The following costs shall not be eligible under this program:

- Grant preparation costs
- Project administration, overhead and staff costs of applicant
- Rental or meeting facilities and food expenses

4.3.2 GIS Data

Cumberland County will make the following GIS data available free of charge to each successful applicant for Planning projects:

- Geology
- Woodlands
- Steep Slopes
- Natural Area Inventory
- Hydrology
- Floodplains
- Wetlands
- Soils
- Agricultural Easements
- Agricultural Security Areas
- Roads
- Municipal Boundaries (as represented to the County by municipal entities)
- Tax Parcels
- Parks & Protected Natural Areas
- Trails
- County Greenways

4.3.3 Project Proposal

A project proposal that includes a scope of work, budget, hours/cost of effort by task, schedule, and public participation plan shall be submitted with all Conservation & Recreation Planning grant applications. The County reserves the right to request changes or additions to the scope of work. The applicant shall submit the name and qualifications of the professional planner anticipated to complete the project. Cumberland County Planning Department staff must approve the final project proposal and associated planning consultant before work shall commence.

5 Funding

5.1 Local Matching Funds

Cumberland County generally will not fund more than 50% of the total cost of an approved project. The grantee is required to provide the remaining contribution through a cash match or in-kind contributions. Proposals to substitute some or the entire required local cash match with in-kind services or property, real or personal, should be

discussed with the Cumberland County Planning Department staff prior to submission of the application. Other local, state, federal or private funding sources are eligible matches to the county funding. Applications that exceed the 50% local match will receive priority consideration.

Special funding consideration will be given to multi-municipal Conservation & Recreation Planning projects. Cumberland County shall consider funding requests for up to 70% of the total project cost of such regional initiatives.

5.2 Maximum Grant Requests

Maximum grant requests are assigned to each eligible project type. Given the expected high demand and limited resources, actual grant awards may not represent 100% of the requested amount.

5.2.1 Land Acquisition

Individual Application - \$100,000 maximum grant

Multi-Municipal Application - Each municipality may request the individual maximum grant request and combine the funding for a multi-municipal application.

5.2.2 Park, Trail & Greenway Development

Individual Application - \$100,000 maximum grant

Multi-Municipal Application - Each municipality may request the individual maximum grant request and combine the funding for a multi-municipal application.

5.2.3 Conservation & Recreation Planning

Individual Application - \$25,000 maximum grant

Multi-Municipal Application - Each municipality may request the individual maximum grant request and combine the funding for a multi-municipal application.

6 The Application Process

Applicants must comply with all components of the application process in order to be eligible for funding.

6.1 General Information

Program guidelines can be secured by contacting the Cumberland County Planning Office at (717) 240-5362, by email at sjwilliams@cumberlandcountypa.gov or online at www.cumberlandcountypa.gov/landpartnerships.

Applicants must schedule a pre-application meeting with Cumberland County Planning Department Staff to discuss the scope and intent of the proposed project.

Applications shall be submitted online at <https://lfforms.ccpa.net/Forms/f1ug5>.

Applications do not need to be completed in one session. Draft applications can be saved online and completed in another session.

Two grant rounds will be made available for 2025-2026. The deadlines to apply for funding are Friday, December 12, 2025 and Friday, June 26, 2026.

6.2 Application Review Process and Review Criteria

The Land Partnerships Program is a competitive grant program. Awards will be made based upon a project's merit and consistency with the review criteria.

A committee of community conservation and recreation stakeholders will to prioritize the projects based upon their merit.

Recommendations will be based on the following criteria:

- Eligibility of the proposed project;
- Consistency of the project with the Cumberland County Comprehensive Plan, the Land Partnerships Plan and other state/regional/local plans;
- Financial feasibility of the proposed project in terms of identifying and accurately estimating eligible costs and ability to provide the required local match;
- Project readiness;
- Benefits of the project to the implementing community and county as a whole.

6.3 Grant Awards

Funding recommendations will be made by the grant review committee and forwarded to the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners for final approval. Grant awards are expected within approximately 90 days of grant submission.

7 Program Administration

Grantees of the Land Partnerships Grant Program must comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

7.1 Contract Activity Period

Grant funds should generally be expended within a two (2) year time period from the date of grant contract execution. Land acquisition grants agreements are one (1) year.

7.2 Grant Agreements

Municipalities must enter into an intergovernmental agreement with Cumberland County in order to be eligible to receive program funds. The intergovernmental agreement must be authorized by an intergovernmental cooperation ordinance adopted by both the county and the municipality. The agreement will state the municipality's intent to participate in Cumberland County's Land Partnerships Program through implementation of the eligible activities contained therein.

A municipality will need to pass one intergovernmental agreement to participate for the life of the Land Partnerships Program. Separate contracts, outlining the terms and

conditions of that particular project, will be required for each project receiving program funds.

Eligible not-for-profit organizations are required to enter into a contract agreement with Cumberland County that outlines the terms and conditions for each project funded through the program.

7.3 Reporting Requirements

A meeting between the applicant, the consultant (if appropriate), and staff of the Cumberland County Planning Department is recommended before the project begins. This will ensure that all parties are fully aware of the project requirements and administrative procedures before any work begins. The applicant, the consultant, and staff of the Cumberland County Planning Department will communicate periodically according to the project schedule. The Cumberland County Planning Department will monitor the progress of construction/improvements and/or review draft documents as set by the project schedule. The applicant shall provide written progress reports on a semiannual basis to the Cumberland County Planning Department to update the County on the status of the project. The County reserves the right to withhold grant funds should the project not proceed to completion in a reasonably timely manner, as determined in the sole discretion of the County.

7.4 Payment for Services

The grantee shall submit a disbursement request to the Cumberland County Planning Department for costs incurred. Grant funds will generally be released through two requests from the grantee. The first payment (50% of approved grant) shall occur following execution of the contract. The second payment (50% of approved grant), shall occur at project closeout upon receipt of the final request for disbursement and the following information:

- Completed Request for Disbursement Form
- A copy of the applicants cancelled check(s) in payment of eligible expenses and copies of all invoices or a letter from the vendor or consultant stating they have been paid in full.
- Proof of in-kind services.
- Proof of adoption or acceptance of plan/study (Conservation & Recreation Planning grants).
- An electronic copy of the final adopted product in Word and pdf format (Conservation & Recreation Planning grants).
- Pictures of final project (when applicable).
- Proof of project signage acknowledging county funding. The County will make signage available to successful applicants free of charge. Any plan/ordinance/study shall include a written acknowledgement of county funding in the final product.